



Water Quality NewsFlash

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Beach Bacteria Standards – EPA steps in – The U.S. EPA publishes *water quality criteria* for various pollutants. These criteria are then used by the states in establishing their own water quality standards. The states' criteria generally must be at least as restrictive as the criteria published by EPA. (These criteria are called objectives in California.). In 1986, EPA published *Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Bacteria*; however, the states have been slow to adopt these criteria. In California, only the LA Regional Board has adopted objectives for beaches with "water contact recreation" which are equivalent to EPA's criteria. Recently proposed Ocean Plan revisions were intended to address this issue but the whole revision process was delayed when the State Board reopened the Triennial Review for the Ocean Plan.

Now EPA has issued a proposed regulation which establishes the bacteria criteria for those coastal (and Great Lakes) states which do not comply with the 1986 published criteria. This action is specifically required by the BEACH Act of 2000. For California, this means that new *enterococcus* objectives will be added to the existing standards and will apply for marine recreational beaches other than in the LA Region where they are already in effect. EPA has noted that state health regulations adopted pursuant to California Assembly Bill 411 already include enterococcus requirements for coastal waters; however, these health regulations are not the equivalent of water quality standards under the Clean Water Act.

In its work on the Ocean Plan revisions, the SWRCB staff stated their position that total and fecal coliform should be used as objectives in addition to the enterococcus objective recommended by EPA. It is probable that the Ocean Plan revisions, when eventually adopted, will include both the EPA enterococcus objective as well as supplemental fecal and total coliform objectives which the Board staff believe are essential. EPA notes in their proposal that in marine waters enterococci survive longer than coliform, similar to the pathogens of concern. "In addition, fecal coliforms are sometimes detected where fecal contamination is absent, possibly resulting in inaccurate assessments of recreational safety."

Stormwater runoff from roadways and other municipal sources frequently contains bacteria concentrations that exceed these standards. BMPs that can consistently reduce bacteria levels to comply with standards are not readily available; however, the Santa Monica Bay Beaches Wet-Weather Bacteria TMDL is exploring options to control bacteria in municipal runoff.

If the OP revisions include the federal criteria, the EPA-promulgated standards will be withdrawn. The proposed regulations were published in the July 9th Federal Register:
<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-WATER/2004/July/Day-09/w15614.pdf>

Stormwater Training – Courses, videos, documents, etc. posted – The State Water Resources Control Board Storm Water Unit has a useful section on storm-water related training and related documents on their web site: <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/stormwtr/training.html>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, fkrieger@msn.com with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>